

University of Groningen

My parents know best

Buunk, Abraham P.

Published in:
Interpersona: an international journal on personal relationships

DOI:
[10.5964/ijpr.v9i1.184](https://doi.org/10.5964/ijpr.v9i1.184)

IMPORTANT NOTE: You are advised to consult the publisher's version (publisher's PDF) if you wish to cite from it. Please check the document version below.

Document Version
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Publication date:
2015

[Link to publication in University of Groningen/UMCG research database](#)

Citation for published version (APA):
Buunk, A. P. (2015). My parents know best: No mating with members from other ethnic groups.
Interpersona: an international journal on personal relationships, 9(1), 100-113.
<https://doi.org/10.5964/ijpr.v9i1.184>

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Articles

My Parents Know Best: No Mating With Members From Other Ethnic Groups

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Abstract

This study examined the opposition against out-group mating and the attitude towards parental influence on mate choice among 107 Dutch, 69 Moroccan, and 69 Turkish participants aged between 15 and 25. The level of preferred parental influence on mate choice was considerably higher among the Turks and Moroccans than among the Dutch, but females in both ethnic groups were less in favor of parental influence on mate choice than males were. Overall, males showed a higher opposition against interethnic dating than females did, and the Turks showed a higher level of opposition to interethnic mating than both the Moroccans and the Dutch. In addition, the effect of opposition against interethnic mating on preferred parental influence on mate choice was especially pronounced among the Turks, somewhat less so among the Moroccans, and least strong among the Dutch. Especially young males with a Turkish and Moroccan background seem to hold on to the values of the cultures they come from, and particularly Turkish immigrants seem keen on keeping the cohesion of their ethnic group intact by opposing interethnic dating, and by favoring parental influence on mate choice as a way to achieve this goal.

Keywords: arranged marriage, mate choice, parental influence, ethnic groups, Turks, Moroccans, Dutch, immigration

Interpersona, 2015, Vol. 9(1), 100–113, doi:10.5964/ijpr.v9i1.184

Received: 2015-01-11. Accepted: 2015-05-11. Published (VoR): 2015-06-30.

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In Western societies individuals are generally assumed to freely choose their marital partners. However, independently selecting one's spouse on the basis of one's own preferences, and particularly on the basis of romantic love, is cross-culturally and historically a quite rare phenomenon, and has often been considered as decidedly the wrong basis for the choice of a spouse (Apostolou, 2014; Goode, 1959; Harris, 1995; Levine, Sato, Hashimoto, & Verma, 1995; Murstein, 1974; Pool, 1972; Reiss, 1980). In many societies the parents were – and still are – the ones who eventually decide with whom their child should marry. In about 70% of contemporary hunter-gatherer societies, the most common form of mate-choice is parental arrangement, where parents, and especially the fathers, choose the spouse for their children, and especially for their daughters (Apostolou, 2007). For example, among the !Kung of South Africa, first marriages are usually arranged by parents and other close relatives (Shostak, 1983), and in a community of Australian aboriginals, marriages are predominantly arranged (Burbank, 1995). Arranged marriages are even more common in agropastoral societies (Apostolou, 2014), and such marriages have traditionally been prevalent in many Asian and Middle Eastern countries. For example, in Japan recently still 25% to 30% of all marriages were arranged (Applbaum, 1995). Recent DNA evidence suggests that parental

control over courtship has been for long been characteristic of human societies (Walker, Hill, Flinn, & Ellsworth, 2011).

There seem to be various ultimate motives why parents want to control the mate choice of their offspring (cf. Buunk, Park, & Dubbs, 2008). First, according to the grandmother hypothesis, menopause evolved in human females because the fitness benefits of caring for grandchildren outweighed the fitness benefits of continued reproduction (e.g., Herndon, 2010; Hill & Hurtado, 1991). If humans—especially females—have evolved to invest in their grandchildren, it follows that they would also have evolved to ensure that their investment is maximized. Consequently, they are likely to have evolved preferences for their children to mate in a manner that produces healthy and plentiful grandchildren (cf. van den Berg, Fawcett, Buunk, & Weissing, 2013). Secondly, Buunk, Pollet, and Dubbs (2012) argued that a major reason of why parents want to influence the mate choice of their offspring is that they prefer to maintain the in-group homogeneous and want to prevent fragmentation of this in-group. Parents tend to be especially attentive to traits suggesting that the potential mate of their children will contribute to family and group cohesion, and that their grandchildren are socialized in a culturally appropriate manner. All over the world, marriages between members of different ethnic groups are generally considered as something wrong that needs to be prevented, especially by parents (Murdock, 1949). More specifically, the virtually universal criteria that parents tend to impose are that the future spouse of their children should come from the same ethnic group, the same religious group, and the same - or higher - social class (see Apostolou, 2007, 2008, 2013, 2014; Buunk et al., 2008; Dubbs & Buunk, 2010; Sprecher & Chandak, 1992). The desire to prevent one's offspring from marrying out-group members may become particularly salient among immigrant groups, where children are usually in frequent contact with members of the majority group and with members of other ethnic groups. Indeed, a high level of parental control over the mate choice of one's children continues to occur among many immigrant groups in Western societies. For example, at the end of the 20th century, about half of the marriages of Indian immigrants in the US were being arranged (Menon, 1989; see also Talbani & Hasanali, 2000). Not surprisingly, second-generation immigrants indicate that conflicts with their parents in the realm of dating and marriage are common when they want to choose a spouse independently (e.g., Dugsin, 2001; Hynie, Lalonde, & Lee, 2006; Lalonde, Hynie, Pannu, & Tatla, 2004), and such conflicts tend to evolve around the issue of marrying in-group versus out-group members. For instance, Hindu women living in the UK indicate that their parents would never accept a son-in-law from outside of their caste or culture (Bhopal, 1997). A second-generation Indian American woman revealed her reasons for marrying within her own socio-cultural group: "To this day, [my mother] has not forgiven my brothers for marrying [European] Americans" (Das Gupta, 1997, p. 584). In line with this, in a study in Mexico among parents of children in the age between 15 and 25, Buunk et al. (2012) found that opposition against out-group mating was a strong predictor of preferred parental influence on mate choice, and more so among men – who traditionally controlled the mate choice of their offspring - than among women. This gender difference was especially pronounced in the Mestizo group – the group with the highest status, who would assumedly have the strongest interest in preserving the status of their group.

The present research was theoretically and methodologically built upon the study by Buunk, Pollet, and Dubbs (2012). We examined (1) to what extent young second generation immigrants of Turkish and Moroccan descent in the Netherlands, and native Dutch do favor parental influence on mate choice; (2) to what extent these young people do oppose mating individuals from the other ethnic groups; and (3) to what extent the perceived desirability of parental influence on mate choice is related to opposition against mating out-group members. The Turkish and Moroccans are by far the largest immigrant groups in The Netherlands: 2.3% of the Dutch population have Turkish origins, and 2.1% have Moroccan origins (which is similar to the percentage for people of Surinamese origin,

2.1%). The immigration of Turkish and Moroccan workers began when in the late 1960s men from Turkey and Moroccan were hired as 'guest workers' in various industrial sectors. However, most current immigrants from these countries arrived later, not as guest workers, but under a regulation of family reunification, or in the expectation of finding a better life. Although many Turkish and Moroccan immigrants are integrating well, and have currently a number of representatives in the parliament, overall, both groups still occupy a relatively low status position in society, and are socio-economically worse-off than the native Dutch (e.g., [Hindriks, Verkuyten, & Coenders, 2014](#)). In line with [Arends-Tóth and Van de Vijver \(2008\)](#), the groups examined here are referred to as Turks, Moroccans and Dutch, although longer labels like Turkish Dutch, Moroccan Dutch and native Dutch might do more justice to their actual situation.

Assessing the attitudes towards parental influence on mate choice and towards interethnic mating in these groups is particularly relevant as the Dutch have historically been strongly in favor of free mate choice, which may cause a large cultural gap between the Dutch on the one hand and immigrants from Morocco and Turkey on the other hand. In fact, since the Middle Ages, young men and women in Western Europe, and especially in The Netherlands, had a level of freedom in their mating behavior that surpassed even what is found currently in collectivist societies such as China ([de Moor & van Zanden, 2006](#)). In contrast, in both Turkey and Morocco, arranged marriages are still rather common. While in Turkey the influence of parents on mate choice has decreased in the past age as a consequence of Westernization, in present day Turkey still about 50% of the marriages are arranged by the families, and extended family involvement in the ceremony of giving permission to the marriage occurred during the 1990's in 44% of the marriages ([Hortaçsu, 2003](#)). A study by [Medora, Larson, Hortaçsu, and Dave \(2002\)](#) showed that Turkish young people had less romantic ideas about marriage than American young people, although more romantic ideas than young people from India, a country in which the tradition of arranged marriages is historically quite strong. However, most Turkish immigrants to The Netherlands come from rural areas in Anatolia, where arranged marriages are probably more common than in Westernized urban areas. In Morocco, many young people currently still believe that their parents should select a marriage partner for them ([Davis & Davis, 1995](#)).

On the basis of the foregoing, it can be predicted that young Turks and Moroccans in The Netherlands will have a more favorable attitude towards parental influence on mate choice, and will be more opposed to interethnic mating than ethnically Dutch young people. A qualitative study among Turkish and Moroccan immigrants revealed indeed that parents often tried to arrange marriages in which daughters were "given away" to members of the in-group, i.e., friends or relatives of the father ([Sterckx & Bouw, 2005](#)). In addition, there is some evidence that family values may be less likely affected by acculturation to the majority culture than family ties. [Arends-Tóth and Van de Vijver \(2008\)](#), found that Turks and Moroccans had higher scores on family values than the Dutch and than immigrants from former Dutch colonies (Antilleans and Surinamese), for instance values about what parents should do for their children, about what children should do for their parents, and about family obligations (see also [de Valk & Schans, 2008](#)). It must be noted, however, that the cultural values of Turkish and Moroccan immigrants are by no means identical. For example, there seems more cohesion and ethnic solidarity and transmission of collective values among Turkish than among Moroccan immigrants ([Phalet & Schönplflug, 2001](#)), which may involve a more positive attitude towards parental influence on mate choice among the Turks than among the Moroccans. While the foregoing implies that the immigrant groups will show more opposition to out-group mating than the ethnically Dutch, one might also argue that the ethnically Dutch, being the highest status group, will be more, rather than less, opposed against out-group mating to maintain the status of their group.

To summarize, in the present research the same theoretical issues were examined as in the study by Buunk et al. (2012) in Mexico. The first aim of the study was to assess whether young Turks and Moroccans had a stronger preference for parental influence on mate choice than ethnically Dutch young people, and whether Turks and Moroccans differed in this respect. Secondly, it was examined whether ethnically Dutch young people showed more opposition against out-group mating than both immigrant groups, and whether Turks and Moroccans differed in this respect. Thirdly, it was examined to what extent an opposition to out-group mating was related to a preference for parental influence on mate choice, particularly among the two immigrant groups. Fourthly, with respect to all these issues, also gender differences were examined. Males are in most cultures the main actors in determining the mate choice of their offspring, and therefore males in the immigrant groups may favor more parental control over mate choice than females (Apostolou, 2014). In addition, females of the immigrant groups may be more open to interethnic dating and be more negative about parental control of their mate choice as they may feel they may enhance their status by marrying economically well-off Dutch males (cf. Buunk et al., 2012). Men tend to have generally more prejudices towards outgroup members than women (e.g., Pratto, Sidanius, & Levin, 2006), which might be accompanied by more negative attitudes towards intergroup marriages. However, it is difficult to make an unequivocal prediction on gender differences in the attitude towards dating members of other ethnic groups. For example, a study by Tucker and Mitchell-Kernan (1995) in California found that Black, White and Latino men had considerably more often than women from these groups engaged in interethnic dating (see also Feliciano, Robnett, & Komaie, 2009).

The respondents were deliberately selected in the age range of 15 to 25 years. This age range was chosen for a couple reasons. First, in the Mexican study (Buunk, Park, & Duncan, 2010) and in a similar study among Dutch parents (Dubbs & Buunk, 2010), people were selected who had offspring in this age range, making the results in this sense comparable. Secondly, while the average age of marriage in the Netherlands is 31.7 and 29.2 for men and women respectively (Eurostat, 2008), the frequency of cohabitation is high and a high percentage of women, 71.3%, have a steady partner by the age of 24 (Kalmijn, 2007). By the age 15, most girls have had their first period, and many children begin to think about dating, or have already started to date. Thus, 15 to 25 seemed like a reasonable age range to use for the study. Finally, this age range is considered to constitute the formative years, during which one's identity is established, and the establishment of close relationships is an important concern. Therefore, children in this age range, will generally be, or have recently been, confronted with potential prospective marital partners; thus the concerns of their parents over their mate choice may be a salient issue for them.

Method

The questionnaire was conducted in Dutch and was administered by Flycatcher, an independent research agency that conducts online survey collection in samples representative of the Dutch population. Participants were rewarded for completing a questionnaire, by receiving a credit for an online store. Flycatcher has a data-base of potential participants and a sample was selected as representative as possible of Dutch, Turkish and Moroccan young people between the ages of 15 to 25 living in The Netherlands. It was more difficult to obtain the collaboration of Moroccan and Turkish young people than of the Dutch. The final sample consisted of 245 participants, with a mean age of $M = 20.88$, $SD = 2.94$, with a range from 15 to 25. The sample included 107 Dutch (52 men and 55 women), 69 Moroccan (19 men and 50 women), and 69 Turkish young people (26 men and 43 women). The highest obtained educational level was as follows: 9% primary school, 15% lower level of high school, 26% high

school, 24% lower professional education, 16% higher professional education, and 10% university. As intended, a large majority of the respondents (91%) was born in The Netherlands, with 5% born in Morocco, and 4% in Turkey. In addition, as intended, all the Moroccans' fathers and 82% of the Moroccans' mothers were born in Morocco, and 91% of the Turks' fathers and 83% of the Turks' mothers were born in Turkey. The present sample of Moroccans and Turks can therefore be reasonably viewed as comprising second generation immigrants.

Parental Influence on Mate Choice

To assess parental influence on mate choice the scale developed by Buunk et al. (2010) was used. This scale was guided by previous work (e.g., Goode, 1959; Hortaçsu & Oral, 1994; Pool, 1972; Prakasa Rao & Rao, 1976; Riley, 1994; Theodorson, 1965; Xie & Combs, 1996), and covers the *range* of possible forms of parental influence on mate choice (varying from complete autonomy of children to complete control by parents). The scale was developed to be sensitive to variations in the degree of parental influence within and between cultures. For instance, it includes an item that seems to represent the most extreme form of parental influence—the practice in which a daughter is treated as a kind of property that the father is allowed to give to another man (Goode, 1959)—as well as an item that represents the other extreme—the norm that children have the right to select their own partner without any interference by their parents. Participants were asked to give their personal beliefs or opinions. All ten items had the format of a statement with which people could respond on a 5-point scale from *I disagree completely* to *I agree completely*. Seven items consisted of statements expressing parental influence on mate choice, whereas three items consisted of statements expressing individual choice. In the present sample, the reliability was high, $\alpha = .83$. This was somewhat higher than in some previous studies. To be able to compare the findings with the scale to other studies, the total score was divided by the number of items, $M = 1.86$, $SD = .72$.

Opposition to Interethnic Mating

This scale consisted of five items and was largely similar to the one used by Buunk et al. (2012). The items were taken from the scale for intergroup mating competition developed by Klavina and Buunk (2013), but was adapted to be suitable for young people. The items were *'Boys and girls from different ethnic groups have too different backgrounds to get married'*, *'People who marry people from another ethnic group are responsible for the deterioration of their community'*, *'When a boy/girl receives attention from many women/men who want to date him, he/she should give priority to the women/men of his own group'*, *'I become angry when I see that so many boys/girls are interested in girls/boys from other ethnic groups'*, and *'I find it disgusting boys/girls from other ethnic groups are flirting with girls/boys from my ethnic group'*. The reliability was high, $\alpha = .83$, $M = 11.11$, $SD = 5.01$.

Results

Parental Influence on Mate Choice

It was first examined whether a preference for parental influence on mate choice was higher among the two immigrant groups than among the Dutch, whether this preference differed between the two immigrant groups, and whether there were gender differences in this regard. A univariate GLM analysis with gender and ethnic group as factors showed a significant main effect of gender, $F(1, 236) = 9.41$, $p < .01$. In addition, there was a highly significant effect of ethnic group, $F(2, 236) = 42.19$, $p < .001$, and a significant interaction between gender and ethnic group $F(2, 239) = 5.03$, $p < .01$. Overall, men ($M = 1.93$, $SD = 0.79$) showed a higher preference for parental influence on mate choice than women did ($M = 1.83$, $SD = 0.68$), and, as expected, both Turkish respondents ($M = 2.29$, $SD = 0.77$) as well Moroccan respondents ($M = 2.23$, $SD = 0.69$) showed a higher preference for parental influence

on mate choice than did Dutch respondents ($M = 1.56$, $SD = 0.57$). Turkish and Moroccan respondents indicated virtually identical levels of preference for parental influence on mate choice. However, the interaction between gender and ethnic group qualified these effects considerably. As Figure 1 shows, among the Dutch, males ($M = 1.45$, $SD = 0.47$) and females ($M = 1.50$, $SD = 0.45$) did not differ, $t(105) = 0.52$, $p = .61$. Among Turkish respondents, the difference only approached significance, $t(67) = 0.52$, $p = .054$, with males indicating somewhat higher preferred levels of parental influence on mate choice than females did, respectively $M = 2.43$, $SD = 0.78$ vs. $M = 2.06$, $SD = 0.66$. Only among the Moroccan respondents males indicated significantly higher preferred levels of parental influence on mate choice than females did, respectively $M = 2.54$, $SD = 0.64$ vs. $M = 1.97$, $SD = 0.70$, $t(67) = 3.09$, $p < .01$. From another perspective, as Figure 1 shows, the females from both immigrant groups had an attitude much closer to that of Dutch females than males had to that of Dutch males. When controlling for educational level, all effects stayed the same, whereas the effect of educational level was not significant, $F(1, 238) = 0.51$, $p = .48$.

Next, the means of the present immigrant groups were compared with those of East Asian immigrants in Canada. As Buunk et al. (2010) provided only data for the group as a whole, the data for males and females were compared here with the means for men and women combined in the East Asian sample ($M = 2.76$, $SD = 0.75$, $n = 64$). Compared to this sample, Moroccan males, $t(81) = 1.16$, $p = .25$, had the same level of preferred parental influence on mate choice, whereas Turkish males showed a somewhat lower level that was marginally significant, $t(88) = 1.87$, $p = .06$. However, Moroccan as well as Turkish females showed highly significant lower levels of preferred parental influence on mate choice than did the Canadian East Asian sample, $t(112) = 5.75$, $p < .0001$, and $t(105) = 4.96$, $p < .0001$, respectively. Thus, also these data clearly suggest that the females of both immigrant groups were more westernized than the males.

Opposition to Interethnic Mating

Next, it was examined whether opposition to interethnic mating was higher among the Dutch, whether such opposition differed between the two immigrant groups, and whether there were gender differences in this regard. A univariate GLM analysis with gender and ethnic group as factors showed a significant main effect of gender, $F(1, 239) = 7.45$, $p < .01$, and a marginally significant effect of ethnic group, $F(2, 239) = 2.89$, $p = .06$. There was no significant interaction between gender and ethnic group $F(2, 239) = 0.14$, *ns*. Overall, men ($M = 12.13$, $SD = 5.29$) showed a higher level of opposition to interethnic mating than women did ($M = 10.43$, $SD = 4.87$), and, unlike what was expected, Turkish respondents ($M = 12.32$, $SD = 5.36$) showed a higher level of opposition to interethnic mating than both Moroccan ($M = 10.64$, $SD = 4.62$) and Dutch respondents ($M = 10.63$, $SD = 5.14$). The last two groups indicated virtually identical levels of opposition to interethnic mating. Turkish respondents showed indeed a significantly higher level of opposition to interethnic mating than the two other ethnic groups combined, $F(1, 243) = 5.53$, $p < .02$.

When controlling for educational level, most effects stayed the same, but the effect of ethnic group was now significant, $F(2, 238) = 3.90$, $p < .05$, as was the effect of educational level, $F(1, 238) = 5.23$, $p < .05$. The lower the educational level, the more opposition to interethnic mating there was, $r = .13$, $p < .05$.

Effect of Gender, Ethnic Group and Opposition to Interethnic Mating on Parental Influence on Mate Choice

To examine the central issue in this research—how a preference for parental influence on mate choice was related to opposition to interethnic mating for and females in the three ethnic groups—a univariate GLM analysis was conducted with gender and ethnic group as factors, and with opposition to intergroup mating as covariate. All

main effects and interactions were included in the model. In the full model there were no longer effects of ethnic group, $F(2, 233) = 1.54, p = .22$, and gender $F(1, 233) = 0.00, p = .99$, on the preferred level of parental influence. These findings suggest that differences in the preferred level of parental influence on mate choice between males and females and between the ethnic groups can at least in part be explained by differences in the opposition to interethnic mating. Such opposition had indeed a strong independent effect, $F(2, 233) = 59.74, p < .001$, that was qualified by a highly significant interaction between opposition to interethnic mating and ethnic group $F(2, 233) = 11.24, p < .001$. None of the other effects were significant, F 's $< 2.14, p$'s $> .12$. Separate regression analyses within the three ethnic groups showed that particularly among the Turkish respondents a preference for parental influence on mate choice was related to opposition against interethnic mating. More specifically, among the Dutch respondents, opposition to interethnic mating was only marginally significantly related to a preference for parental influence on mate choice, $R^2 = .17, F(1, 105) = 3.01, p = .09, \beta = 0.17$. Among the Moroccan respondents, opposition to interethnic mating was quite strongly related to a preference for parental influence on mate choice, $R^2 = .26, F(1, 67) = 23.02, p < .001, \beta = 0.51$, whereas the strongest effect was found among the Turkish respondents, $R^2 = .39, F(1, 67) = 42.17, p < .001, \beta = 0.62$.

When controlling for educational level, all effects stayed the same, whereas the effect of educational level was not significant, $F(1, 232) = 0.05, p = .82$.

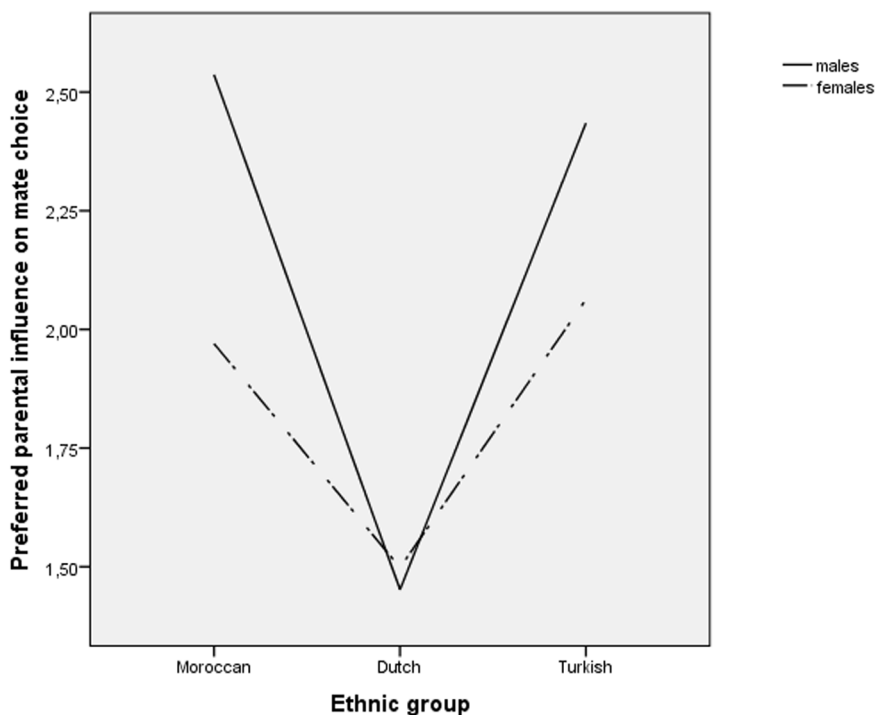


Figure 1. Preferred parental influence on mate choice for males and females in the three ethnic groups.

Discussion

The present research examined the preferred parental influence on mate choice, the opposition against interethnic mating, and the relation between both variables among young people from two recent immigrant groups in the Netherlands, i.e., Turks and Moroccans, and among Dutch young people. A first important finding was that, as expected, overall, the level of preferred parental influence was considerably higher among the Turks and Moroccans than among the Dutch. This finding suggests that Turkish and Moroccan youngsters favor to a considerable degree that individuals follow the preferences of their parents when choosing a mate. Thus, overall, the young people from these immigrant groups still seem to hold on to the values of the cultures they come from. This is in line with the finding of [Arends-Tóth and Van de Vijver \(2008\)](#) that particularly family values may be resistant to acculturation, and with findings from studies showing that in many immigrant groups in Western societies, especially those from South Asia, parents try to a considerable degree to influence the mate choice of their children, resulting often in conflicts between parents and children (e.g., [Bhopal, 1997](#); [Das Gupta, 1997](#); [Dugsin, 2001](#); [Hynie et al., 2006](#); [Lalonde et al., 2004](#); [Menon, 1989](#); [Talbani & Hasanali, 2000](#)).

Nevertheless, in the present research an unexpected, but striking gender difference was found: females in both ethnic groups were, as expected, less in favor of parental influence on mate choice than males. Moreover, compared to young East Asian immigrants in Canada, females were much less in favor of such influence, whereas males did differ relatively little from this group. These findings may be interpreted in various ways. First, one may conclude that females from these groups are integrating and assimilating faster than males do. Indeed, in general, Moroccan and Turkish women are more likely to finish their education, and to find a job, which also seems to point to a relatively smooth integration of these women into Dutch society. Second, and related to the foregoing, it may be that males see more advantages of their parents in helping them to find a mate, as they might, given their often low education and their unstable employment situation, have an unfavorable position on the mating market. Indeed, there has been for years much publicity in The Netherlands about Moroccan and Turkish males obtaining with the help of their parents brides from their country of origin. In contrast, as noted in the Introduction, for females it may be advantageous to have little control by their parents of their mate choice, as they may enhance their status by marrying economically well-off Dutch males.

The higher preferred level of parental influence on the mate choice of their offspring by males is also in line with the suggestion in the Introduction that it always have been primarily the males who used such influence to build alliances and obtain mates (cf. [Apostolou, 2014](#)). Since men do, unlike women, not experience a drop in fertility as they grow older, men may still be, more than women concerned with achieving status and obtaining resources that can increase their mate-value. One potential way in which fathers can obtain status and resources is through the marriages of their children. Indeed, among indigenous people, marriages are a common way to build alliances between families. For example, as noted in the Introduction, among the Yanomamö of Venezuela young girls are promised in marriage at an early age by older male kin (e.g. brothers, uncles and the father), in order to create alliances ([Chagnon, 1992](#)). There also are examples in which men pick their daughter's suitor solely on basis of the suitor's wealth or that of his family. In Gusiland, Kenya, fathers often "...married off their daughters to rich, often older polygamists, who were unappealing to their intended wives" ([Shadle, 2003](#), p. 247).

There were a number of noteworthy findings on opposition against interethnic dating. Such opposition was the highest among the Turks, who showed a higher level of such opposition than both ethnically Moroccan and Dutch respondents. The last two groups indicated virtually identical levels of opposition to interethnic mating. Thus, unlike

what was expected, the opposition against interethnic mating was not higher among the Moroccans than among the Dutch. This finding will be discussed later on in more detail. In contrast with the findings by [Buunk et al. \(2012\)](#) in Mexico, overall, males showed a higher opposition against interethnic dating than females did. This is also in contrast with the finding that men tend in general to be more open to marrying and dating members of other ethnic groups than women are (e.g., [Feliciano et al., 2009](#)). Indeed, an early study by [Bogardus \(1928\)](#) showed that men were more accepting of close relationships, like marriage and friendship with members of other groups than women were. This is in line with the more recent study by [Tucker and Mitchell-Kernan \(1995\)](#) in California who found that among Blacks, Whites and Latinos, men had more often than women engaged in interethnic dating. The stronger opposition against interethnic dating found in the present sample among males may reflect the fact that, when answering the questions, males had especially in mind men from other ethnic groups who were dating women from their own ethnic group. It can as yet not be ascertained if this was indeed the case, and it is not clear why in Mexico an opposite pattern was found. Nevertheless, the present finding is in line with the notion that throughout human history men tend to view men from other groups often as competitors, and that in both tribal and modern societies intergroup hostility is more prevalent among males than among females (e.g., [Wrangham & Peterson 1996](#); [Chagnon, 1988](#)). Indeed, men tend to have generally more negative attitudes and prejudices towards members of other groups than women do (e.g., [Pratto et al., 2006](#)). According to the male warrior hypothesis, the long history of intergroup conflict involving male coalitions competing over reproductively relevant resources has made intergroup competition more pronounced among men than women ([Van Vugt, 2009](#); [Van Vugt, De Cremer, & Janssen, 2007](#); [Van Vugt & Park, 2009](#)).

The finding that, overall, opposition against interethnic dating had a strong independent association with a preference for parental influence on mate choice is in line with a plethora of studies showing that in a wide variety of cultures, a major concern of parents is that the mate comes from the same ethnic group (e.g., [Buunk et al., 2008](#)). Indeed, marriages between members of different ethnic groups are generally considered as something wrong that needs to be prevented ([Murdock, 1949](#)), and do usually occur in relatively small numbers. A prime example of this is the United States where only 4% of White Americans marry non-Whites ([Qian & Lichter, 2007](#)). Remarkably, however, there were in the present research large differences between the three ethnic groups. The Turks stood out in a clear way from the Moroccans as well as the Dutch. In addition to the finding that they did show the strongest opposition against interethnic mating, the effect of such opposition on preferred parental influence on mate choice was also especially pronounced among the Turks, somewhat less so among the Moroccans, and least strong among the Dutch. This suggests that in The Netherlands, especially Turkish immigrants are keen on keeping the cohesion of their ethnic group intact by opposing interethnic dating, and by favoring parental influence on mate choice as a way to achieve this goal. These findings are not directly compatible with the findings from other research that family ties and traditional family values are equally strong among Turkish and Moroccan immigrants in The Netherlands, and stronger than among the Dutch ([Arends-Tóth & Van de Vijver, 2008, 2009](#)), and that the two ethnic groups do not differ in their perceptions of filial obligations, that are in both groups stronger than among the Dutch ([de Valk & Schans, 2008](#)). However, the present findings are in line with those of [Hindriks, Verkuyten, and Coenders \(2014\)](#) that compared to Moroccans, Turks show a stronger social distance to other groups, and with the results of [Gijsberts and Dagevos \(2009\)](#) that the Turks in The Netherlands constitute a more cohesive and closed group than the Moroccans, that has relatively little contact with members from other ethnic groups. Thus, rather than specific family related processes, do the present findings on the special position of the Turks seem to reflect a relatively strong desire to maintain the cohesiveness within their own ethnic group.

This study has a number of potential limitations. First, except for opposition against out-group mating, other factors that might affect preferred levels of parental influence on mate choice were not explored. For example, a desire to improve one's status may influence especially among males the inclination to control the mate choice of one's offspring. Second, there were uneven numbers of participants in the three groups, and especially Turkish and Moroccan males were underrepresented, which may have reduced the power to find effects. However, it seems that most effects were robust enough to be found even in the relatively small male samples. Finally, one cannot assume that the samples were completely representative for the populations studied, as, for example a number of people refused to participate, and the educational level of the Turks and Moroccans was rather high. Nevertheless, the data collection was done very conscientiously by an experienced agency, and there is no reason to assume that there was a substantial bias in the sample. To conclude then, it was shown that among young people in the immigrant populations studied here the preferred level of parental influence on mate choice was relatively high, and that opposition against mating with members of other ethnic groups was an important factor underlying the preferred level of parental influence on mate choice. Often subtle, but theoretically meaningful differences were found between men and women and between the three ethnic groups. By examining how cultural and gender factors affect the parental influence on mate choice, the present research underlines that mate choice is not just a matter of individuals freely selecting a mate, but may be to an important extent be affected by the parents. Moreover, this study contributes to the literature on acculturation, and suggests that among specific ethnic groups, young people may oppose interethnic mating, and view parental influence on mate choice as an important mechanism to prevent this type of mating. Given that interethnic marriages are usually considered to be an important step in the process of acculturation (Bogardus, 1928), the present research highlights that, at least in The Netherlands, especially young Turks are reluctant to engage in such a step. Finally, the present study further exemplifies that for a more complete understanding of human mating, future research must attend more carefully to the role of parents in the mate choice of their children.

Funding

This research was supported by an Academy Professor Grant from the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences.

Competing Interests

The author has declared that no competing interests exist.

Acknowledgments

The author has no support to report.

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